Muslim Position Explained

(Continued)

June 17, 1940 offering their full co-operating to the Government for the intensification of war efforts:---

"The Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League, while being of the opinion that further clarification contained in the letter of His Excellency the Viceroy, dated the 19th of April 1940, with regard to the assurances asked for by the All-India Muslim League, is not satisfactory, endorses the following from the statement issued by the President, Mr. M. A. Jinnah, to the Press on the 27th of May 1940:---

Statement

'Up to the present moment, we have not created any difficulty nor have we embarrassed the British Government in the prosecution of the war.

'The Provinces where the Muslim League has a dominant voice have been left free to co-operate with the British Government, pending their consideration with regard to the assurances we have asked for, and in particular that the British Government should make no declaration regarding the future constitutional problems of India and the vital issues that have been raised in that connection without our approval and consent.

'Nevertheless, without prejudice to the adjustment of the larger issues latter on, we were even willing as far back as November last, to consider the proposal of the Viceroy to bring about an honourable and workable adjustment in the provincial field, which would have been followed up with our representatives being appointed to the Executive Council of the Central Government to the extent permissible within the framework of the present constitution and existing law.

'But this proposal was summarily rejected by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress.

'A similar attempt was again made by His Excellency early in February, which met the same fate. Since then it seems that the Viceroy has been waiting for the Congress to pass its word.

'With regard to Mr. Amery's statement and broadcast appeal of His Excellency the Viceroy, may I say that it is up to the British Government to show trust in Muslim Leadership – there are many ways of doing so and as confident friends seek our wholehearted co-operation? And we shall not fail'.

The Menace

"The Working Committee looks with alarm the growing menace of Nazi aggression which has been most ruthlessly depriving one nation after another of its liberty and freedom and regards the unprovoked attack by the Italian Government against the Allies, as most unwarranted and immoral at a time when France was engaged in a brave struggle against very heavy odds.

"The grave world situation demands serious efforts on the part of every Indian for the defence of his country and the Working Committee calls upon the Government of India to prepare the country in an organised manner to meet every eventuality. The Committee is constrained to state that the proposals for the defence of India, indicated in the statements of Their Excellencies the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief as well as the statements of some provincial Governors, are wholly inadequate to meet the urgent requirements of the situation. The Committee, therefore, authorises its President to enter into communication with His Excellency the Viceroy with a view to explore the possibility of devising prompt and effective measures to mobilize the country's resources for the purpose of intensifying war efforts and the defence of India.

Satisfactory Basis

"The Committee is of the view that unless a satisfactory basis for close co-operation is agreed upon on an all-India basis, and not province-wise, between the government and the Muslim League and such other parties as are willing to undertake the responsibility for the defence of the country in the face of imminent danger; the real purpose and objective will not be served and achieved.

"The Working Committee is of the opinion that in view of the immediate grave danger that is facing the country real purpose will not be served by the Musalmans and others merely joining the proposed provincial and district war committees with their present scope and functions".

Inadequate

The Viceroy made a declaration on August 8, 1940 on behalf of His Majesty's Government which is now known as the August Declaration. The League welcomed that part of the August Declaration which referred to the future constitution of India, and also endorsed the other part of the Declaration concerning the transitory period, as it was based on the principle which the Muslim League had urged upon the British Government. But the specific offer which the Viceroy had made to the League, viz, offering two seats in his Executive Council, was grossly inadequate to meet the very objects which had prompted the League to offer full co-operation. In the circumstances the League was constrained to reject the offer on the grounds given in their resolution of September 28, 1940 which is as follows:---

"The Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League in its meeting at Bombay on the 2nd of September 1940, after considering the letter of His Excellency the Viceroy, dated the 14th of August 1940, addressed to the President, containing the specific offer regarding the proposed expansion of the Governor General's Executive Council and the establishment of a War Advisory Council, had requested H. E. the Viceroy to reconsider the matter and authorised the President to seek further information and clarification, praticularly on the points set out in the resolutions before the Committee could deal with the offer. As a result of the communication of these resolutions to H. E. the Viceroy, he invited the President to meet him on the 24th of September and after full and free discussion of the points arising out of those resolutions, H. E. was pleased to send a formal reply dated the 25th of September 1940. After giving there most earnest and careful consideration to the whole matter, the Committee, notwithstanding their desire from the very beginning to help in the prosecution of the war and the defence of India, regret that they are unable to accept the present offer for the following reasons:---

Reasons

(1) 'That the inclusion of only two representatives of the Muslim League in the proposed expansion of the Governor General's Executive Council, of which neither the total strength nor the number of additional members has so far been

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